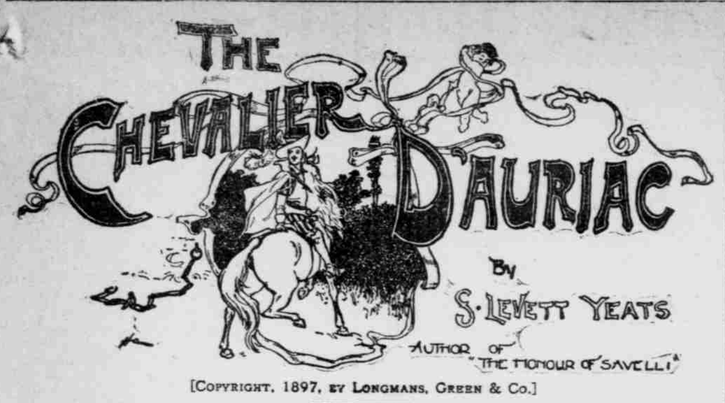

CHAPTER I.

THE JUSTICE OF M. DE RONE.

"Mille diables! Lost again! The devil runs in those dice!" and de Gomeron, with an impatient sweep of his hand, scattered the little spotted cubes on to the floor of the deserted and half-ruined hut, wherein we were beguiling the weariness of our picket duty before La Fere, with a shake of our elbows, and a few flagons of wine, captured from Monsieur the King of Navarre, as we, in our folly, called him still.

I knew little of de Gomeron, except that he was of the Camargue, and had followed the fortunes of d'Aumale from Arques to Ivry, from Ivry to the Exile in the Low Countries, and that he held a commission from the duke as captain in his guards. Of our personal relations it is enough to say that we hated each other, and would have crossed swords ere now but for the iron discipline maintained by de Rone—a discipline the bouquet of which I had already scented, having escaped by the skin of my teeth after an affair with de Gonnor, who trod on my toe at the general's levee, and was run through the ribs at sunrise the next morning.

Up to the time this occurred I had been attached to de Rone's staff, but after the accident to de Gonnor was banished to the outposts, thinking myself lucky to escape with that.

At any rate, the outpost was under my command. Imagine, therefore, my disgust when I found that de Gomeron had been detached to examine into and report upon my charge. He did this moreover in so offensive a manner that I could barely restrain myself from parading him on the stretch of turf behind the thorn hedge that fenced in the inclosure to the hovel.

Our feelings towards each other being as they were, it would seem odd that we should have diced and drunk together; but the situation was one of armed peace; and, besides, time had to be killed, as for the past week M. de Rethelois, formerly as lively as a cricket, had kept himself close as a nun of Port Royal behind the walls of La Fere, and affairs were ineffably dull. I was certain, however, that we should soon break into open quarrel, and on this night I felt a mad anger against the man as he sat staring at me, and it was all I could do to restrain myself from flinging the lees of the wine in my glass in his face and abiding the result.

It was at this moment that we heard the quick challenge of the sentry outside, the password as sharply answered, and the tramp of feet.

The same idea flashed through both our minds—it must be the general, and de Gomeron gave expression to the thought.

"Corbleu! de Rone perhaps—the old bat on the wing."

There followed a shuffling of feet, and before a man could count two, Nicholas, the sergeant of our picket, with a file of men entered the hut, thrusting a couple of prisoners, a man and a woman, before them.

"Two birds from La Fere, my captain," and Nicholas with a salute to de Gomeron pointed to his prize. "We took them," he ran on, "at the ford near the Red mill, and but for the moon they would have gone free; spies no doubt. The old one is M. le Mouchard, I swear. There is fox in every line of his face; and as for madame there—so the old gentleman calls her—in time I warrant she will learn to love the camp of the Holy league," and the sergeant pushed the lantern so that it shown full on the lady's face. A curious light came into de Gomeron's eyes as he looked at her, and she shrank back at the sergeant's words and action, whilst the old man strained at the cords that bound his wrists till the lines of the blue veins stood out on his forehead. Madame was unbound; but her hood had fallen back, loosening in its fall a mass of chestnut hair, and from this framework her eyes glanced from one to another of us, half in fear and half in anger.

"Messieurs!" There was a tremble in the sweet voice, and there was light enough to see her color come and go. "Messieurs! We are no spies. It is true we are from La Fere, but all that we did was to try and escape thence—"

"To the camp of the Bearnais—eh, madame?" interrupted de Gomeron.

"To the camp of the king of France," she flashed back at him, a red spot rising on each cheek. "Messieurs!" she went on, "you are gentlemen, are you not? You will let us go. Surely the Holy league wars not with women and old men?"

The mention of the league stirred her companion and he gave tongue.

"The Holy league!" he exclaimed with a savage scorn. "Madame, though we stand delivered unto these sons of Belial, I must speak, for my heart is full. Yea! Shall my lips be sealed before the enemies of the Lord! The Holy league! Ha! ha! There is no Holy league. It died at Ivry." Here de Gomeron cut in with his quick, stern voice: "Be silent, sir! or else a gag will stop your tongue," and then with a bow, "Madame, it goes to my heart to detain you; but war is war, and we have no option. Will you not be seated? All that this poor hut affords is yours," and he bent low again, perhaps to hide the expression in his eyes.

She made no effort to take the chair he offered, but burst out passionately:

"Monsieur, I see you command here, and it is to you to whom I must appeal. Monsieur, I give you my word of honor we are no spies. The rules of war allow the ransom of prisoners, and anything you name will be paid. Monsieur, I pray you let us go."

As she finished her appeal madame turned towards the captain with a gesture of entreaty; but in this movement she saw that in his voice and manner which paled her cheeks to marble, and she made a half-irresolute step towards her companion as if for protection. De Gomeron observed this, and laughed under his heavy black mustache.

"Madame, but there are some things which have no price! And there is no ransom you could name which would tempt Adam de Gomeron to part with his prisoners—with one of them at any rate. You are no spy, I know; such eyes as yours were never made to count the strength of battalions. As for your friend there, we have means to make him tell about himself to-morrow; and you must not bruise your tender feet by walking through the night to the camp of monsieur—the king of France. In a day or so, perhaps," he went on with a horrible smile, "but not to-night. Come!" and he stepped up to her. "Come, taste the d'Arbois—it is from your friends—and learn to love the poor soldiers of the Holy league."

Saying this he attempted to pass his arm round her waist, but, slipping from his grasp, and her cheeks aflame, madame struck him across the face with the back of her hand.

The rest was done in a flash, and de Gomeron reeled back with bleeding lips. It was in me to follow up my blow by passing my sword through the man, so mad was I in my fury; but luckily for him Nicholas hung on my arm and saved the villain's life. He righted himself at once, and passing his hand across his mouth, spoke to me quite coolly and collectedly, but with livid features:

"We finish this outside, sir; follow me," and picking up his rapier, which lay on the table, where he had thrown it on the entrance of the prisoners, de Gomeron stepped out of the door. In the excitement of the moment the men poured after him, and I was the last to follow. It came to me like lightning that the prisoners were unguarded, and slipping my dagger from its sheath, as I went out, I thrust its haft into madame's hand, and I saw that she understood from the thanks in her eyes.

It was but a stone throw to the stretch of green, which extended as level as a tennis court for a hundred paces or so, and then sloped gently downward towards the junction of the Serre and the Oise. Beyond rose the walls of La Fere, whose gray outlines, lit up here and there by the flare of a lamp or fire, were clearly visible in the bright moonlight. So clear was this light, that I could distinctly make out the blue flowers of the patch of borage, beyond which de Gomeron was awaiting me. When I came up I found him standing with his back to the moon. He had thrown off his doublet and was in his shirt sleeves, which were rolled up to his elbows, and Nicholas and the men stood a little on one side, utterly forgetful of the prisoners, and eager as bloodhounds to witness the coming fight. It took but half a minute to make myself ready, and borrowing a poniard from Nicholas to help me to parry, I took my position. Then there was an angry little clash and our blades met, looking for all the world like two thin streaks of fire in the moonlight. We were both sober enough now, besides being in deadly earnest, and de Gomeron began to change tactics and attack in his turn. At this point a cloud obscured the moonlight, and my opponent, springing back, called out: "Hold! hold till the cloud passes! We cannot see."

"But I can, messieurs," answered a deep voice to our right. "What means this fool's work?" and a tall figure, the white line of a drawn sword shining in its hand, stepped between us, coming, as it were, from nowhere. The cloud passed, and the moon was again brilliant and clear. The light fell on the commanding form before us, showing the high aquiline features and grizzled hair of de Rone himself.

"So this is how my outposts are kept?" he said. "M. de Gomeron, you are the senior officer here and I await your explanation."

"I command the guards of the Duc d'Aumale," began de Gomeron, sullenly, but de Rone interrupted him in the same deep measured voice.

"I know that. Your explanation, or," and in fierce anger, "by God! you will hang like a common thief by sunrise."

"A gentleman must defend his honor. Orders or no orders, general, there are times when one must fight. There was a matter in connection with some prisoners, and I was struck by M. d'Auriac. I have nothing further to say."

"Now, M. d'Auriac, what have you to say?"

"The prisoners will, perhaps, explain to your excellency why I struck this man."

"Take me to them."

We gathered up our belongings, and, hastily dressing, led the way back to the hut. My reflections were none of the most cheerful. We all knew de Rone, and knew that, his mind once made up, nothing could turn him. De Gomeron had some chance of escape, as I was the open aggressor. But we had no great time for thought, as a few steps brought us to the door of the hut. Another step took us in, and de Rone, with a curling lip, cast a glance around the room.

"I do not see the prisoners," said de Rone, quietly.

It was not likely, I thought to myself. They were gone—not a doubt of that. On the floor, near my feet, were some cut cords, and, lying on them, a knot of black and white ribbon, that had fallen there as if by chance. I had seen it last at the shoulder of madame's dress, and something told me it was not there by accident. There was, at any rate, no hope for me from the prisoners, but a sudden impulse I could not understand urged me to get the knot of ribbon, so, stooping low, I picked up the bow and the cut cords, and, with a careless movement, flung the latter on the table, saying quietly: "They have escaped, your excellency."

"And with them your explanation, M. d'Auriac, eh? Corbleu! But the camp marshal will have his hands full to-morrow;" and Nicholas' halberd all but fell from his hands as the general's eye rested on him. De Rone went on: "M. de Gomeron, you have given me a reason for your conduct that will hold good this once. Further orders will reach you at daylight about your neglect of your prisoners. As for you," and he turned on me with the sharp command, "Follow me. You—knaves! fetch me my horse—he is tethered to the clump of elms to the right there."

Two men vanished from the door to do his bidding, and I took the opportunity to secrete the knot of ribbon. In a minute or so we heard the sound of horses' hoofs, and as we went out, I saw there were two beasts at the door, and, from the whinny of welcome that came to me, that one was mine, and Nicholas was at his head.

As I sprang into the saddle the good fellow leaned forward and whispered: "Make a dash for it, chevalier, and change the flag."

I shook my head and followed de Rone, who had already moved a few paces onwards. And yet, as I rode on, Nicholas' words came back to me with an insistent force.

"Gallop!"

De Rone's sharp command broke the thread of my thoughts, and ended all chance of escape. We set spurs to our horses and splashed through the ford of the Oise, a half mile from the outpost. On the other bank a picket challenged, and, giving them the word, we rode in the direction of camp. A few

MADAME STRUCK HIM ACROSS THE FACE.

strides more and we reined in at the door of the general's tent. The guard presented arms and I received a brief order to dismount and follow de Rone.

I entered the tent, and stood patiently whilst he walked backwards and forwards for a little time. Suddenly he stopped and, facing me, said:

"Well, M. d'Auriac?"

"It could not be helped, your excellency," I stammered.

"You said that of De Gonnor, and promised it should never occur again—"

"But there were circumstances—"

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed, "I guess them all—wine—dice—women. One of the prisoners was a woman. I saw you pick up that knot of ribbon. There is no excuse. None."

"I had the honor to be the first man behind your excellency at the storm of Laon," I said, with a happy recollection.

"And saved my life, you were going to say," he cut in. I bowed, and de Rone began again to pace up and down, tugging at his short-pointed beard.

"See here, I will pay my debt; but first ask if I have your parole not to attempt escape. If you do not give it—" and he laid his hand on a call-bell, with an inquiring look towards me.

"I will not attempt escape."

"Then you will not have to complain of the justice of de Rone. To-morrow some things will happen, and amongst them will be the lamented death of the Sieur d'Auriac. This much I will tell you. To-morrow the king and I meet once more—and you must die on the field. Win or lose, if I catch you alive at the close of the day, I will hang you as high as Haman; and now go."

My first thought on leaving de Rone was to make my way direct to the quarters of the staff, where I felt sure of welcome and accommodation for the rest of the night. As I came near to them I saw a light streaming from the partly open door of the largest tent, and from within burst a chorus of voices singing an old chanson of Guienne.

The last line was repeated amidst peals of laughter, followed by the crashing of glass. It was enough for me. I was in no mood for any further folly, or any more d'Arbois, and resolved to make the best of it in the open, as at this hour it was worse than useless to attempt to find my lackey Jacques, whom I had left behind in the camp with my belongings when I went on to the outposts. Tethering my horse to a stump, I removed the saddle, which I made shift to use as a cushion, and, leaning my back against it, was soon as comfortable as circumstances would permit. My sleep could not have lasted much more than an hour; but so profound was it that ages seemed to have passed when I awoke with a start, and the consciousness of movement around me. The moon was on the wane; but I saw that the camp was astir, and that the men were being mustered as silently as possible.

"So things are about to happen," I said to myself, recalling de Rone's words, and, hastily saddling my horse, sprang on his back, and moved towards the general's tent. All around me was the muffled tramp of feet, the jingle of chain bits and steel scabbards, the plunging of impatient horses, and a subdued hum of voices, above which rose now and again a hoarse word of command, as regiment after regiment wheeled into position on the level stretch before us.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

ESSAY ON CHILDHOOD.

Rueful Reminiscences of That Beatific Period Which All of Us Have Known.

The following essay on childhood was recently read at the Turniptown Literary society by Mr. Randolph Hogg, one of the society's star members:

"Childhood is a good thing. It is something all of us have had more or less experience with. It is a pretty difficult matter to get along in the world without being a child at some period in our careers. Childhood is the flush budding of life's young spring. It is the season of fairy dreams and golden ambitions, and cramp, colic and send ticks. And, as we grow old, as the ghostly shadows of the great afternoon steal athwart our pathways, we love to sit down and recount the joys of the vanished past. We love to recall the exhilarating thrill which filled our breast when we stuck our thumb in our mouth and looked in at the dining-room door just in time to see the fat chicken leg we longed for vanish down the throat of the local preacher. How cold and desolate the world looked! How we longed to hear a motion to adjourn! How we yearned to hand in a long letter of regrets! In fact, we threatened to go exclusively into the yearning business. Another pleasant memory that comes back to us mixed up with rose mist is that of pushing a wheelbarrow along the margin of a stony brook for the purpose of gathering up a job lot of stonebruises. Then what noble aspirations thrilled our soul when we stole into the pantry and lassoed the fruit jar with a bowstring and with a manly pull landed it on the floor with such violence that the cranky old bottom followed the example of South Carolina and seceded from the union! And with what rapture do we recall the tidal wave of joy that swept over us when mother came softly in and wrapped us in the downy folds of the broom handle!

"Then there was the old schoolhouse. The memory of it comes back to us like the delicious pleasure which hovers around the presence of a bill collector, and over the mazy vision of our dreams floats the sublime utterances of Shakespeare:

"'How utterly tough were the days of our kidhood,
In the schoolhouse that stood over there by the slough;
We toted the water and cut all the firewood,
And swept up the floor, for we had it to do.'"

—Atlanta Journal.

Satisfying a Skeptic.

Young Mokeby (sullenly)—I wants ma' fo' dollahs back, dat I paid for dis chawm, Unc' Johnsing; none ob ma' dreams come true.

Unc' Johnsing (the conjure man)—Doan' you remember de dreams dat you fo'git; de dreams you know you dream but can't recall?

"Why, yas! Many times I know I hab had dreams, but in de mawnin' I can't rec'lec' dem!"

"Dem's de witch dreams! Dem's de ones dat come true!"—Puck.

Managing Tramps.

Mistress—Did anyone call while I was out?

Servant—No one, ma'am, exceptin' a tramp. He wanted somethin' to eat; but I told him there was nothin' ready, an' he'd have to wait till the leddy of the house got back from the cooking school, an' mebbe she'd make him something.

Mistress—Of all things! Did he wait?

Servant—No, ma'am. He runned.—N. Y. Weekly.

A Typical Juror.

An old German, being drawn to serve on a coroner's jury, sat stupidly and stolidly listening to the evidence for an hour or so. Then he became weary in his attention. Suddenly he fixed his eyes on the corpse, advanced to it, and raised the corner of the sheet. "Mein Gott, shentlemens!" he exclaimed, starting back in surprise and fright, "dot man ish dead!"—San Francisco Argonaut.

Queens of Europe.

There have never been more than three contemporary European queens; in fact, the number who have occupied the throne in medieval and modern times is comparatively small. England heads the list with five. Russia can boast of four, but the total comes to considerably under 30 altogether.

The Tallest Obelisk.

A single stone 115 feet long, ten feet square at one end and four feet square at the other, has been successfully cut from the sandstone quarries at Houghton Point, Wis. It is supposed to be the longest monolith ever quarried.—Youth's Companion.

STEEL STEAMERS COLLIDE.

The Globe and the James B. Colgate Come Together at Duluth, Minn.—Both Vessels Resting on the Bottom.

DULUTH, Minn., Nov. 26.—At 1:30 Saturday morning the Globe and the whaleback James B. Colgate, two large steel steamers, came into collision in the harbor. Both are badly damaged. Their forward bulkheads kept them from sinking on the spot. The Colgate is resting on the bottom near the Inman tug office and the Globe was towed into the Omaha slip, where she rests on the bottom. No one was seriously hurt, although some of the crew asleep forward had narrow escapes from drowning.

OIL FLOWS IN THE STREETS.

Tanks Punctured by Falling Derricks at Los Angeles—Several Houses and Barns Crushed—Severe Storm.

LOS ANGELES, Cal., Nov. 26.—A terrible windstorm in the oil district caused much damage. Thirty-seven derricks and many overhead pulley wires and smokestacks were blown down. Two oil tanks holding a thousand gallons of oil were punctured by falling derricks and the oil is running through the streets. Several houses and barns were crushed under the falling derricks. No casualties are reported.

Two hundred men are clearing away the debris in the streets.

JOSEPH W. BABCOCK.
(Chairman Republican Congressional Campaign Committee.)

Turkish Ministers Favor Reforms.

CONSTANTINOPLE, Nov. 26.—Several of the Turkish ministers have submitted to the sultan memorials pointing out the disturbed state of the empire and the reforms they considered necessary. The sultan is irritated at this attitude on the part of his ministers and it is expected that he will dismiss several of them, although it will be difficult to find substitutes who do not favor reforms.

Kicked Her to Death.

MONTGOMERY, W. Va., Nov. 26.—At a dance in the "Bear Wallow," a colored dance hall, Gaines Carter became engaged in a row with a colored woman named Florence. He kicked her in the abdomen, as a result of which she died Friday morning. The jail where Carter is confined is being guarded, as it is feared his friends will release him.

A Peanut Trust.

NORFOLK, Va., Nov. 26.—There has been practically completed within the last three days the formation of a big trust with a capital of $3,000,000, whose intention is to control the entire peanut production of the United States. It is stated that the signatures of all the principal concerns of this city and section have been secured.

A Texas Hanging.

CLERBURNE, Tex., Nov. 26.—John B. Shaw was hanged at Clerburne Friday for killing Thomas Craine a year ago. Shaw, who claimed to be an infidel, had refused all along to have any talk with or visits from preachers, but at the last moment he relented and permitted a preacher to be with him on the scaffold.

Asphyxiated by Gas.

CHICAGO, Nov. 26.—Harry J. Myers was found dead in his room Friday. The gas jet had been removed and death was caused by the escaping fumes. Myers was formerly connected with theaters in Cleveland and Cincinnati. He left a note asking that Miss Laura Thomas, of Summitville, Ia., be notified of his death.

In Her Wedding Gown.

AKRON, O., Nov. 26.—Miss Ella Chapman will be buried in the dress that was to have been her wedding gown. She died Thursday after two day's illness. Her affianced husband, W. R. Heslop, was at her bedside. The wedding was to have taken place next week. A month ago the ceremony was postponed because of the death of Heslop's father.

The Receipts Were Divided.

NEW YORK, Nov. 26.—The receipts for the Corbett-Sharkey fight amounted to $47,876. It is reported in sporting circles that this neat pot, less $2,000, was equally divided between the fighters and the club, each getting a third. The purse of $20,000 is said to have been a myth.

Decision Given to Lavigne.

SAN FRANCISCO, Nov. 26.—In the Lavigne-Tracy fight Friday night the decision was given to Lavigne in the twentieth round.

RIVER ACCIDENT

Steamboat Boiler at Stockton, Cal., Explodes—Six Killed and Many Hurt.

The Screams of the Injured Passengers Were Heart-Rending — Deck Hands, Pinned in Their Bunks, Received the Full Force of the Steam.

STOCKTON, Cal. Nov. 28.—The most disastrous river accident in the history of Stockton occurred Sunday morning near Fourteen Mile slough, when a part of one of the boilers of the T. C. Walker, which left San Francisco about 6 o'clock Saturday night was blown out, killing five and dangerously wounding 11 persons, while probably 15 or 20 were more or less badly hurt. The T. C. Walker is owned by the California Navigation and Improvement Co., and ran between San Francisco and Stockton.

The majority of the passengers were in bed when the explosion occurred and were awakened by the report which was as loud as a cannon's roar. People rushed from their rooms in their night clothes and found the whole forward portion of the steamer's upper works blown away. The electric lights had been put out and the escaping steam enveloped the front portion of the boat till it was impossible to see how much of the boat had been carried away.

The screams of the men who were locked in their rooms near the pilot house were heartrending. Capt. John Tulan had been blown from his bed against the door of the state room and so seriously injured that he could not move. The door could not be forced open as he was jammed up against it. One of the employes of the boat secured an ax and cut the upper part of the room away and finally removed him, but not until he was virtually roasted alive. When pulled out the flesh dropped from his bones in large pieces, and although he was suffering excruciatingly, he bore it bravely and not a groan escaped him as he was taken out of the steam.

Watson Henry, the chief engineer, and his wife were in their room near the pilot house when the explosion occurred. Mrs. Henry was blown through the roof. The flooring was blown upward and she was hurled with great violence a distance of 20 feet toward the bow of the boat. She was horribly crushed by the fury of the explosion and also badly scalded with escaping steam. Her injuries proved fatal at 12:30 Sunday afternoon. She retained consciousness until a few moments before her death. Her suffering was so intense that she begged the physicians in attendance to end her life but all that could be done was to deaden the pain by the use of narcotics.

Mr. Henry was terribly scalded. He was thrown some distance away but not as far as was his wife. He died shortly after being brought to this city.

Mr. Blunt was instantly killed. He was standing on the lower deck as he intended making a landing a short distance above the place where the explosion occurred.

Jerry Daly, the fireman, was in the fire hold of the boat when the accident occurred. The escaping steam completely enveloped him, scarcely a portion of his body escaping the scorching vapor. He died at the receiving hospital at 12:45 Sunday afternoon.

Underneath the lower deck, where the deck hands slept, groans and screams were terrible, for the unfortunate imprisoned men were receiving the full force of the steam as it came from the boilers. Eight of them were almost roasted alive. Those who were able made their way to the deck as best they could while the more seriously injured were unable to get out. Arms and faces of those near the main entrance were frightfully scalded. Dominici, who was on the lower deck, was blown into the water and had to swim ashore after his back was horribly scalded.

Ferdinand Law, of Seattle, died at 6 o'clock Sunday evening at the receiving hospital, making the sixth death.

Gens. Shafter and Garcia Meet.

NEW YORK, Nov. 26.—While passing out of the Fifth avenue hotel Friday night Gen. Shafter and Gen. Calixto Garcia met for the first time since the capitulation of Santiago. The generals saluted simultaneously, then shook hands and conversed pleasantly for several minutes. Each seemed pleased at the meeting.

Blanco Will Sail for Spain December 3.

HAVANA, Nov. 26.—Passports were Friday delivered to the aides-de camp of Gen. Blanco's staff, who will sail for Spain on the steamer Juan Forgas December 3. On the same steamer it is announced, will embark Marshal Blanco, Gen. Solano and his staff.

A Klondike Mastodon Story.

VAN COUVER, B. C., Nov. 28.—J. W. Nee, of Tacoma, is here with an interesting Klondike mastodon story. He says of a big pile of bones found on Sulphur creek one was a tooth between four and one-half and five inches long, and nearly two inches thick at the base. Another was the leg of an animal from the knee to the ankle. It was five feet and a half in length. From the ground to this animal's body the distance was probably over ten feet.